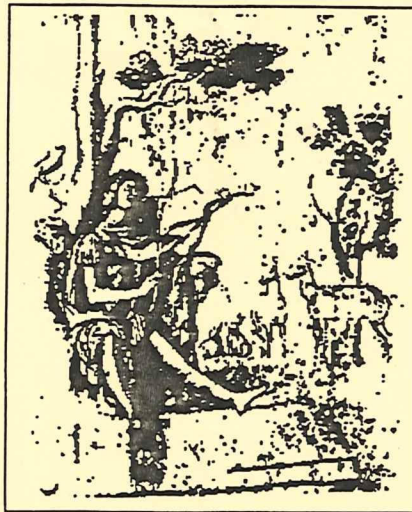


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UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO • FACULTY OF MUSIC • WALTER HALL • OCTOBER 16, 1997 • 12:10PM

Thursday Noon Series

Music & Poetry



presents

In Michelangelo's Mirror

poetry by *Michelangelo Buonarroti*

set to music by *Hugo Wolf* and *Dmitri Shostakovich*



Sterling Beckwith, bass

John Hawkins, piano

Prof. Konrad Eisenbichler, guest commentator

Programme

Prof. Eisenbichler will comment on the poetry of Michelangelo and the translations used by Wolf and Shostakovich.

Michelangelo - Lieder (1897)

Hugo Wolf
(1860 - 1903)

1. Wohl denk'ich oft...
2. Alles endet, was entstehet...
3. Fühlt meine Seele...

from Suite on Words of Michelangelo op. 145 (1974)

Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906 - 1975)

8. Creation
9. Night - a Dialogue
10. Death
11. Immortality

SIDE II



The next Music and Poetry lecture/concert will take place on Thursday, Nov. 13, 1997 at 12:10pm in Walter Hall. Stravinsky's 1952 *Cantata* will be performed. Soloists will be Mary Bella, soprano, and Michael Colvin, tenor, with Prof. Eric Domville, commentator.

IN MICHELANGELO'S MIRROR: A FIRST PERFORMER'S FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Nesterenko and I marveled at the profound effect of the many cyclic links [in Shostakovich's new *Michelangelo Suite*] — for instance, between the introductions of the first movement, "Truth", and of the tenth, "Death".... This introductory passage should be played with a harsh trumpet-like sound, reminiscent of the fanfares signalling the start of an ancient Greek tragedy. It seems to me Shostakovich's work is indeed on a par with Sophocles in the profundity of its philosophical conception, its universal, all-embracing force. The music is a dialogue for piano and voice, a duet of equal partners, and in this it is new and original....

The opening chords of the eighth movement, "Creator's Work", inevitably reminded me of his music for *Hamlet*. Shostakovich did not deny the association, but told me there was another also. He had read Michelangelo's power and precision were such that with his very first blow he could hew off all the superfluous stone from a raw block, and very rarely needed to correct what he had done. Indeed, this image is almost visually present in Shostakovich's setting, with its abrasive chords, syncopated rhythms, and quick bursts of melody spiralling upward like whirlwinds. You can vividly hear the great sculptor's hammer-blows and the scraping of his chisel on the marble.

For the introduction to the ninth movement, "Night", I wanted to create a sense of tense and hushed silence, a sort of numb detachment resulting from long reflection on grief.... Instinctively I was seeking to recapture the impression made on me by Michelangelo's unfinished sculptures, where a large part of his conception remains imprisoned in the original marble block, and yet the sculpted contours of the figure fuse with the unworked marble.... In the analogous postlude of the passacaglia-like number ten, "Death", the bell-like sound of the bass resounds for a long time, sustained by the pedal, while the introductory theme rings like a distant reminiscence in the high register of the piano....

On 8 January 1975, [two weeks after its Leningrad world premiere,] we performed the Suite at Shostakovich's Moscow home for a group of his fellow composers and officials of the Composers Union.... The work made an overwhelming impression. Khachaturian asked if the composer intended to orchestrate the Suite. Shostakovich said no, for the moment he didn't intend to. [The orchestral version, opus 145a, was one of the last scores completed before death came in August 1975. — R.S.B.] Khrennikov wanted to know the origin of the first tune in the final movement, "Immortality". Shostakovich told him he had composed this theme as a child, but this was the first time he had used it in a finished work. With its angelic bells sounding in the piano's upper register, its effect here in this late work is indeed masterful and full of deep meaning....

At the end of the evening, the poet Andrei Voznesensky dropped by, bearing his new translations of Michelangelo's poems. Shostakovich had used translations by A. M. Efros. [Abram Markovich Efros, 1888-1954, had a long and distinguished career as art historian and critic in Soviet Russia. An authority on Pushkin and on 19th and 20th century Italian and Russian painters, he was in addition an accomplished translator of lyric poetry into Russian, including works by Dante and Petrarch, the Song of Songs and the Book of Ruth. Obviously an ideal translator for Michelangelo's verse, Efros succeeded in preserving its formal and rhythmic properties while deepening its tone and significance for the modern reader. — R.S.B.] But apparently the composer found those translations not entirely satisfactory for his musical purposes, and he had asked Voznesensky to 'polish' them with his expert ear. However, Voznesensky had written completely new versions, using different metres.... Though they were wonderful in themselves, there was no hope of them coinciding with the melodic line of the vocal part.... So Efros's translations became the established text.

—Excerpted from a memoir by the pianist Evgeny Shenderovich (1918-), who with bass Evgeny Nesterenko gave the premiere performances of Shostakovich's *Michelangelo Suite*; specially commissioned and translated by Elizabeth Wilson for her book *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, (Princeton University Press, © Elizabeth Wilson, 1994, p. 453-457.)

STERLING BECKWITH has appeared as bass soloist in opera and recital across the U.S. and Canada, and has collaborated with major orchestras, choirs and concert artists in both countries.

He became the first head of Music at **York University** in 1969, and remains an active member of York's Graduate Music and Humanities faculties.

For the Music and Poetry concert last October, he served as commentator, speaking on Shostakovich's Tsvetaeva cycle, performed by Vilma Indra Vitols and John Hawkins.

PROFESSOR KONRAD EISENBICHLER is Director of the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies and teaches in the Renaissance Studies Programme at Victoria College in the University of Toronto.

He has published extensively on Italian Renaissance literature and history, and especially on Michelangelo's poetry.

His most recent research project will appear in 1997 from the U of T Press under the title **The Boys of the Archangel Raphael; A youth Confraternity in Florence (1411-1785)**.

JOHN HAWKINS has taught at the University of Toronto since 1970. Active as a pianist and composer, he was one of the founding performing members of Toronto's **New Music Concerts**.

Since 1994 he has organized and participated in a series of Music and Poetry lecture/concerts at the Faculty of Music featuring 20th century vocal works.

Hawkins' latest work, settings of three of Rilke's **Sonnets to Orpheus**, written for tenor Michael Colvin, will be heard for the first time on February 5, 1998 in this series.

Fragment

I' vo pensando al mie viver di prima,
inanzi ch'i' t'amassi, com'egli era:
di me non fu ma' chi facesse stima,
perdendo ogni dì il tempo insino a sera;
forse pensavo di cantare in rima
o di ritrarmi da ogni altra schiera?
Or si fa 'l nome, o per tristo o per buono,
e sassi pure almen chi i' ci sono.

Carnival Song (1524)

Chiunque nasce a morte arriva
nel fuggir del tempo; e 'l sole
niuna cosa lascia viva.
Manca il dolce e quel che dole
e gl'ingegni e le parole;
e le nostre antiche prole
al sole ombre, al vento un fumo.

Come voi uomini fummo,
lieti e tristi, come siete;
e or siàn, come vedete,
terra a sol, di vita priva.

Ogni cosa a morte arriva...

Sonnet (1533)

Non so se s'è la desiata luce
del suo primo fattor, che l'alma sente,
o se dalla memoria della gente
alcun'altra beltà del cor traluce;

o se fama o se sogno alcun produce
agli occhi manifesto, al cor presente,
di sé lasciando un non so che cocente
ch'è forse or quel c'a pianger mi conduce.

Quel ch'i' sento e ch'i' cerco e chi mi guidi
meco non è; né so ben veder dove
trovar mel possa, e par c'altri mel mostri.

Questo, signor, m'avvien, po' ch'i' vi vidi,
c'un dolce amaro, un sì e no mi muove:
certo saranno stati gli occhi vostri.

1. Wohl denk' ich oft

Wohl denk' ich oft an mein vergangenes Leben,
wie es vor meiner Liebe für dich war;
Kein Mensch hat damals Acht auf mich gegeben,
ein jeder Tag verloren für mich war;
Ich dachte wohl, ganz dem Gesang zu leben,
auch mich zu flüchten aus der Menschen Schar...
Genannt in Lob und Tadel bin ich heute,
und dass ich da bin wissen alle Leute!

2. Alles endet, was entsteht

Alles endet, was entsteht.
Alles, alles rings vergehet,
denn die Zeit flieht, und die Sonne
sieht, dass alles rings vergehet,
Denken, Reden, Schmerz und Wonne;
und die wir zu Enkeln hatten
schwanden, wie bei Tag die Schatten,
wie ein Dunst in Windeshauch.

Menschen waren wir ja auch,
froh und traurig, so wie ihr;
und nun sind wir leblos hier,
sind nur Erde, wie ihr sehet...

Alles endet, was entsteht.
Alles, alles rings vergehet.

3. Fühlt meine Seele das ersehnte Licht

Fühlt meine Seele das ersehnte Licht von Gott,
der sie erschuf? Ist es der Strahl
von anderer Schönheit aus dem Jammertal,
der in mein Herz Erinnerung weckend bricht?

Ist es ein Klang, ein Traumgesicht,
das Aug' und Herz mir füllt mit einem Mal
in unbegreiflich glühender Qual,
die mich zu Tränen bringt? Ich weiss es nicht.

Was ich ersehne, fühle, was mich lenkt,
ist nicht in mir: sage mir, wie ich's erwerbe?
Mir zeigt es wohl nur eines Anderen Huld;

Darein bin ich, seit ich dich sah, versenkt.
Mich treibt ein Ja und Nein, ein Süß und Herbe:
Daran sind, Herrin, deine Augen Schuld.

I

I often reflect on the life I once lived
before my love for you.
No one then took notice of me;
one lost day was like the next.
I had a mind to make song my whole life,
or to leave all human company behind.
But today my name is spoken of,
whether in praise or in blame,
for everyone now knows that I exist!

II

Whoever's born must come to death
in the course of time, and the sun
leaves not a thing alive.
Gone are joy and cause of sadness,
and all thinking and all speech,
and our ancient pedigrees,
shadows in the sun, smoke in the wind.

Once, we too were men like you,
sad and joyful, just as you are;
now we are, as you can see,
dust in the sun, deprived of life.

Everything must come to death...

III

Is this the longed-for light of its first Maker
that my soul feels now? Or has it come from other
kinds of beauty, somewhere in this sad world of ours,
to stir such memories in my heart?

Was it a single chord, a face once dreamed,
that filled my sight and mind
with such immeasurably painful brightness,
and now leaves me to weep? I cannot tell.

What I am feeling, what I long for, and what might
guide me toward it, are not within me;
nor can I clearly see where I might find them,
though others seem to show me.

Thus, Lady, have I fared since first I saw you:
This bitter sweetness, this yes-and-no undoes me.
Certainly it must have been your eyes.

Sonnet (1528)

Se 'l mie rozzo martello i duri sassi
forma d'uman aspetto or questo or quello,
dal ministro che 'l guida, iscorge e tiello,
prendendo il moto, va con gli altrui passi.

Ma quel divin che in cielo alberga e stassi,
altri, e sé più, col propio andar fa bello;
e se nessun martel senza martello
si può far, da quel vivo ogni altro fassi.

E perché 'l colpo è di valor più pieno
quant'alza più se stesso alla fucina,
sopra 'l mie questo al ciel n'è gito a volo.

Onde a me non finito verrà meno,
s'or non gli dà la fabbrica divina
aiuto a farlo, c'al mondo era solo.

Sopra la Notte del Buonarroto

La Notte, che tu vedi in sì dolci atti
dormir, fu da un Angelo scolpita
in questo sasso, e perché dorme ha vita.
Destala, se nol credi, e parleratti.

Risposta del Buonarroto

Caro m'è 'l sonno, e più l'esser di sasso,
mentre che 'l danno e la vergogna dura;
non veder, non sentir m'è gran ventura;
però non mi destar, deh, parla basso.

8. ТВОРЧЕСТВО

Когда скалу мой жёсткий молоток
в обличия людей преобразает,
без мастера, который направляет
его удар, он делу б не помог.

Но божий молот из себя извлёк
размах, что миру прелесть сообщает;
все молоты тот молот предвещает,
и в нём одном — им всем живой урок.

Чем выше взмах руки над наковальней,
тем тяжелей удар: так занесён
и надо мной он к высям поднебесным;

мне глыбою коснётся первоначальной,
пока кузнец господень—только он!—
не пособит ударом полновесным.

9. НОЧЬ (диалог)

Вот эта Ночь, что так спокойно спит
перед тобою, ангела создание.
Она из камня, но в ней есть дыханье:
лишь разбуди, — она заговорит.

Мне сладко спать, а пуще камнем быть,
когда кругом позор и преступленье:
не чувствовать, не видеть—облегченье;
умолкни ж, друг: к чему меня будить?

VIII: CREATOR'S WORK

When my crude hammer chops away the stone
to form some human image or another,
were there no master's hand to guide the blows
it would be of no use for any work.

But when God's hammer by itself swings down,
the world is moved to call that matchless beauty.
And since no hammer's made without a hammer,
His is the living model for them all.

A hammer's blow becomes more powerful
the higher it flies up over the forge:
So is one raised above my head to heaven;

Else would this clod stagnate here uncompleted,
until the Master Smith (and only He!)
reshapes it with a fully weighted blow.

IX: NIGHT—A Dialogue

Giovanni Strozzi, on Michelangelo's "Night"

The Night that you see sleeping here so gently
was sculpted by an Angel in this stone.
Although asleep, she seems alive and breathing.
Awaken her — she'll doubtless speak to you.

Michelangelo's Reply

My sleep is sweet, to be of stone still sweeter,
as long as crime and infamy prevail:
To see no more, feel nothing, is a blessing!
Speak low then, friend—no need to wake me now.

Sonnet (after 1555)

Di morte certo, ma non già dell'ora,
la vita è breve e poco me n'avanza;
diletta al senso, è non però la stanza
a l'alma, che mi prega pur ch'i' mora.

Il mondo è cieco e 'l tristo esempio ancora
vince e sommerge ogni prefetta usanza;
spent'è la luce e seco ogni baldanza,
trionfa il falso e 'l ver non surge fora.

Deh, quando fie, Signor, quel che s'aspetta
per chi ti crede? c'ogni troppo indugio
tronca la speme e l'alma fa mortale.

Che val che tanto lume altrui prometta,
s'anzi vien morte, e senza alcun refugio
ferma per sempre in che stato altri assale?

Two Epitaphs (1544)

Qui vuol mie sorte c'anzi tempo i' dorma,
né son già morto; e ben c'albergo cangi,
resto in te vivo, c'or mi vedi e piangi,
se l'un nell'altro amante si trasforma.

Qui son morto creduto; e per conforto
del mondo vissi, e con mille alme in seno
di veri amanti; adunche a venir meno,
per torgen' una sola non son morto.

—German translations by Robert Tarnow

10. СМЕРТЬ

Уж чуя смерть, хоть и не зная срока,
я вижу: жизнь всё убыстряет шаг,
но телу ещё жалко плотских благ,
душе же смерть желаннее порока.

Мир в слепоте: постыдного урока
из власти зла не извлекает зрак,
надежды нет, и всё объемлет мрак,
и ложь царит, и правда прячет око.

Когда ж, господь, наступит то, чего
ждут верные тебе? Ослабевает
в отсрочках вера, душу давит гнёт;

На что нам свет спасенья твоего,
раз смерть быстрее и навсегда являет
нас в срамоте, в которой застаёт?

11. БЕССМЕРТИЕ

Здесь рок послал безвременный мне сон;
но я не мёртв, хоть и опущен в землю.
Я жив в тебе, чьим сетованьям внемлю,
затем что в друге друг отображён.

Я словно б мёртв; но миру в утешенье
я тысячами душ живу в сердцах
всех любящих: и значит, я не прах,
и смертное меня не тронет тленье.

—Russian translations by Abram M. Efros

X: DEATH

Sure of my death, though not yet of its hour,
this life is short and little's left for me;
what still may please my senses cannot hold
my restless soul, which begs for me to die.

The world is blind, and bad example still
defeats and buries every decent custom.
The light's gone out, and with it every hope;
when lying triumphs, truth must hide its eyes.

O Lord, when will Thy faithful see what we
have waited for so long? Each new delay
makes faith grow faint and puts the soul at risk.

What use will be the light of Thy salvation,
if death comes first, and fixes us forever
in this same shameful state, with no escape?

XI: IMMORTALITY

Here fate decreed that I should sleep too soon,
yet I'm not dead; though laid in earth I be,
I still live on in you who see and mourn me:
for each of us is mirrored in the other.

Though seeming dead, I live for this world's comfort
with a thousand different souls in the hearts of lovers;
With one less soul I'll still not turn to dust,
Nor can mortality's decay now touch me.

—Translations from the Italian by James M. Saslow
adapted to the German and Russian by R. S. Beckwith